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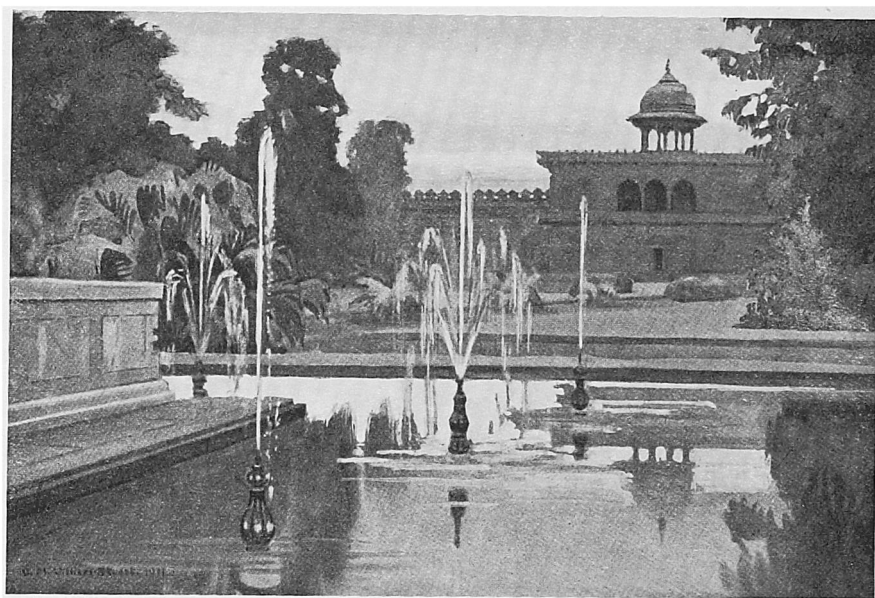
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EAST INDIAN GARDENS

WITH the advent of the Emperor Zehireddin Mohammed, called Babar (the Tiger), the history of garden-design in India may be said to begin; and although his memoirs are a record of thirty-five years spent in almost incessant warfare, they contain repeated references to flowers and gardens.

in thirty-two or thirty-three different sorts of tulips. There is one species which has a scent in some degree like a rose, and which I termed *laleh-gulbui*, (the rose-scented tulip). This species is found only in the Sheikh's Plain, in a small spot of ground, and nowhere else. In the skirts of the same hills, below Perwan, is produced the Hun-



In the Gardens of the Taj

Thus, in the midst of long accounts of wars and skirmishes, the Emperor is found hurrying back to Kabul to see how his Garden of Felicity has prospered. Moreover, wherever he went, he paused to note the flowers, birds, and animals that were new to him. Marching through the mountains of Ghurbend in Afghanistan, he observes that the ground is richly diversified by various kinds of tulips. "I once directed them to be counted, and they brought

dred-leaved tulip, which is likewise found only in one narrow spot of ground, as we emerge from the straits of Ghurbend." This last flower, which Babar mistook for a tulip, is really the double red poppy. For this interesting bit of information we are indebted to C. M. Villiers Stuart's "Gardens of the Great Mughals," with its many illustrations in colour and monochrome.

Babar's love of flowers and gardens appears to have been as much a national

as a personal characteristic. For to this day the far-off towns of Eastern Turkestan are celebrated for their orchards. Sir Aurel Stein, in his account of his adventurous journey to the sand-buried cities of Khotan, constantly mentions the gardens which formed such pleasant camping-grounds all along his route from Kashmir to his headquarters at Khotan. At Yarkand, the garden reserved for him, the Chini Bagh, "proved quite a summer palace within a large walled-in garden." And again, "When alone in my temporary mansion, I felt the reality of the charms which such an abode offers even more than I had in the old Mughal and Sikh garden-residences, once my favourite haunts in the campagna of Lahore."

Many of the fresco paintings uncovered among the ruined cities north of Khotan depicted tanks filled with the sacred lotus flowers; and adjoining one of the buried houses the outlines of an ancient garden were distinctly traceable. Both house and garden had lain buried under the drifting sand for nearly 1600 years when Sir Aurel Stein first discovered them. And yet he found that the trunks of the poplars, which still rise eight to ten feet from the original surface, and are thus clearly visible above the sand-drift, are grouped in the same little squares, and enclosing rectangular avenues which can be seen in every well-kept orchard from Kashgar to Keriya.

Who has not heard of the Gardens of the Taj, the Taj Mahal, the gardens in which is the tomb of Mumtaz-i-Mahal, meaning Ornament of the Palace, the appellation of Shah Jahan's favourite wife. Her tomb in the gardens of the Taj is so famous that it is

called the Venus of Milo of the East, and taj (the second syllable of her name—Mumtaz (or taj)—has come to signify a mausoleum.

The Taj is the one triumph of Indian art in which Moslem and Hindu, official Anglo-Indian and passing English tourist all join to reverence and admire. And in the full prosaic daylight, when the white dome stands up in dazzling sharpness against the deep blue of the sky, nothing is more striking, in a land of great ruins and tawdry modern buildings, than its absolute bloom of perfection.

Even the one particular in which the plan of the Taj differs from those of all other famous Mughal tombs proves the greatness of Shah Jahan's tribute to his favourite wife. A beautiful raised fountain-tank of white marble occupies the center of the fourfold plot, replacing the almost invariable central mausoleum; and the actual tomb of the lady stands on the great platform at the end of the gardens, overlooking the shining reaches of the river Jumna.

What inspired Shah Jahan to change the traditional order of the design? Was it the natural beauty of the site on the river cliff? Did he build this tribute to his adored wife there, because from his balconies in the palace fort he could watch the sunrise and the sunset flush its marble into rosy life? Maybe some Hindu influence, inherited from his Rajput mother unconsciously led him to raise the tomb on the banks of the Jumna, placing the tank for the lotus lilies of the Lord Vishnu in the center of the garden. But there is a story which maintains that the Taj, as we know it, is but half of the plan, and that the great Emperor meant to com-

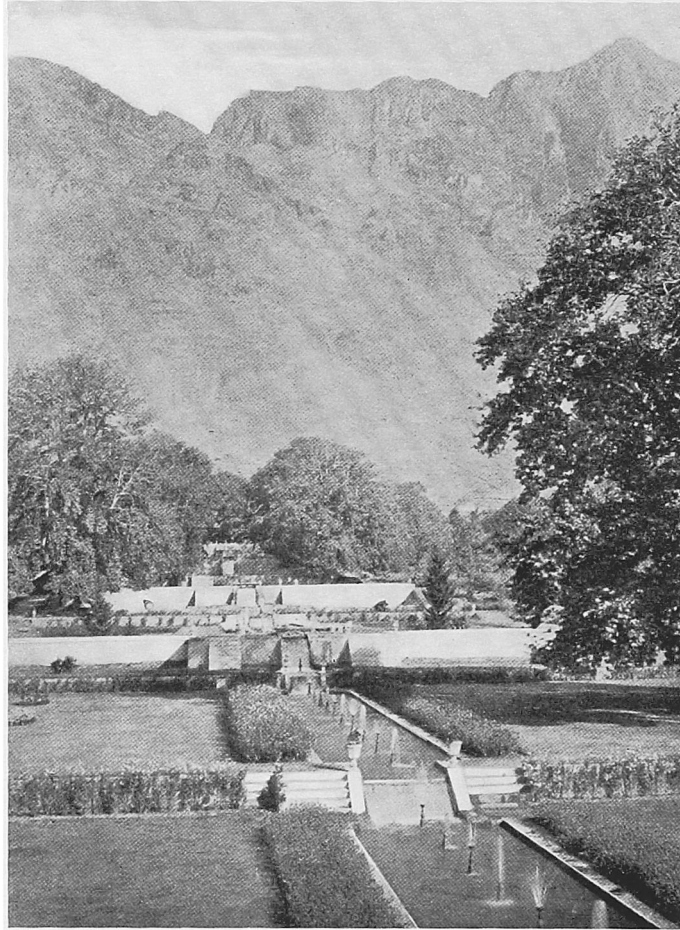
plete his masterpiece with another tomb for himself across the river, joining Taj to Taj by a bridge of black marble—Holy Jumna itself the center of the scheme—Shah Jahan's tomb and that of Mumtaz-i-Mahal on opposite banks, yet united.

Bernier gives an account of the gardens as he saw them in about 1660. Looking over the grounds from the high platform of the mausoleum, he says: "To the left and right of that dome on the lower surface you observe several garden walks covered with trees and many parterres of flowers... Between the end of the principal walk and this dome is an open and pretty large space, which I call a water parterre, be-

cause the stones on which you walk, cut and figured in various forms, represent the borders of box in our parterres." Here it would seem that Bernier is describing the great platform of the Taj itself. Although he is, as a rule, singularly clear and accurate in his observations and statements, in his account of his visit to "the Paradise of the Indies" (Kashmir) with the Emperor Aurungzeb

he speaks of sailing up the whole length of the Shalimar Bagh, but as this garden is on three distinct levels, it is a little difficult to understand how he accomplished the feat. Be that as it may, in spite of his natural preference for all things French, this genial old Parisian cannot restrain his admira-

tion for the Mughal buildings, even though he finds "the columns, the architraves and cornices are, indeed, not formed according to the proportion of the five orders of architecture so strictly observed in French edifices." When, as in 1660, a splendid living art flourished in Europe, that of India was not despised. "I cannot," says Stuart, "leave Bernier at the Taj without



Shah-Dara

quoting the following delightful extract: 'The last time I visited Tage Mehale's mausoleum I was in company of a French merchant, who, as well as myself, thought that this extraordinary fabric could not be sufficiently admired. I did not venture to express my opinion, fearing that my taste might have become corrupted by my long residence in the Indies; and as my companion

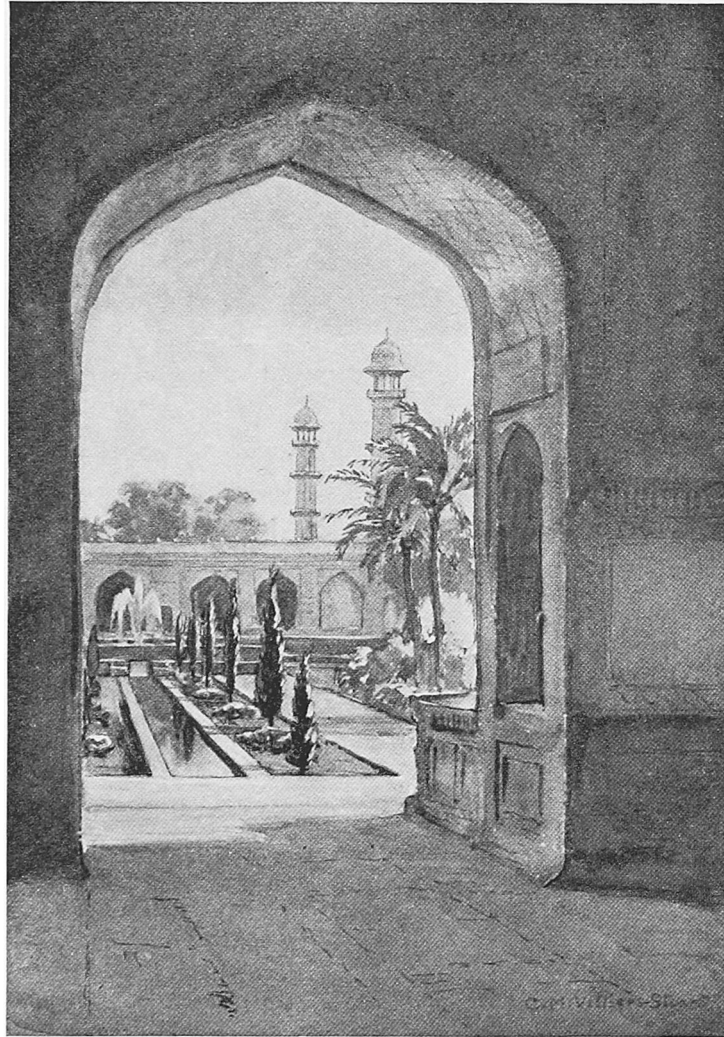
was come recently from France, it was quite a relief to my mind to hear him say that he had seen nothing in Europe so bold and majestic.'"

In the Western world roof gardens are novelties. In the East they are centuries old. Outside of Delhi is an ancient Bagh (or enclosed garden)—a garden even in its ruins, full of romantic charm—and showing by its skilful choice of site, its plan so closely in harmony with the genius of the place, that Babar's great secret of success in garden-craft had not been forgotten when Talkatora Bagh was built. It lies on the lower slopes of the ridge to the south of modern Delhi.

Its walls and corner towers and three big gateways give it from outside an air of being still under cultivation, but within, it is only just possible to discover, through the scrub and thorn bushes that overrun the whole enclosure, the low terraces into which the garden was divided. The cosmic cross of the water-courses can be faintly traced with the

ruins of a large baradari standing in the center. The hummum (baths) are built after the usual fashion, into one of the side walls, and directly opposite these buildings a large tank once occupied the middle of the terrace square.

So far, apart from its division into shallow terraces, it is just the usual Indian garden of the plains, delightful, appropriate, but much resembling many others. Then, through the trees at the far end of the garden, is perceived one of those elements of surprise and contrast which lend so magical a charm to these formal Mughal baghs. The upper garden wall is replaced by a long masonry terrace twenty



The Nishat Bagh

or more feet above the lower enclosure. Immediately beneath the wall runs a wide walk, which is slightly raised above the general level, and ends on either hand in great ramps of paved brick-work leading up to the topmost terrace. This proves to be a platform about forty feet wide with octagonal towers at each end, and in the center

the remains of several buildings and living rooms; the whole terrace forming a roof-garden, like some elaborate zenana quarters in a great city palace, including pavilions to sleep in, flower-beds, and fountains. Our illustration, taken from a Rajputana palace built in the Mughal style, shows an evening scene, with musicians performing on a roof garden, where the little fountain plays amid the small square flower-beds.

The pictured garden is shut in by dark trees, their leaves patterned against the moonlit sky; but the ladies' terrace at Talkatora has the stirring freedom of a vast outlook—all the plains of Delhi melting away into the blue haze of a far-off mountain range. Pale against the horizon shine the domes, minarets, and fortress towers of Shah Jahanabad; nearer, the graceful tomb of Safdar Jang is plainly seen, and beyond towards the river stands Humayun's massive dome. Then, turning to the hills behind, at the very foot of the great embankment, lies the blue jewel of a little hillside tarn, its ripples lapping the stones of

the old terrace wall, and surrounded on all other sides by the red parched rocks—Such magical scenes are witnessed in the East!

Nur-Jahan's Garden of Delight, now called Shah-Dara, which is shown in one of our illustrations, lies across the



An East Indian Roof Garden

Ravi, five miles north of Lahore. The road from the city runs past the fort and Aurungzeb's huge Badshahi Masjid (Imperial Mosque)—the only great mosque in India with a garden court-yard, and on through a dense cool woodland, out to where the picturesque bridge of boats spans the wide sandy bed of the river. On the far side scattered plantations and groups of wild palms marked the sites of

many ruined pleasure-grounds between the water and the high walls of the old royal garden. It was here in the Dilkusha Bagh that Jahangir was buried, in spite of his dying request to be taken back to Verinag, the favourite Kashmir spring where he and Nur-Jahan (the "Lady of the Doves") had spent so many happy summers.

The gardens are entered, like those

of the Taj, through a serai courtyard. This in itself is a very fine building, a great square with high gateways and a series of arched alcoves opening on to a wide terrace running all round the walls. These recesses formed convenient quarters for the guards and numerous servants when the Court paid a passing visit to the gardens; and at other times afforded a halting-place for wayfarers and pilgrims from the north arriving after the city gates across the river had been closed.

The tomb itself stands in the center of the second enclosure. Its model was that of I'timadud-Daulah at Agra, but it is on an immense scale, and the dome was either never completed, or else has been since destroyed. The garden is a very large one, in plan much resembling that of Sikandarah. A series of raised fountain-tanks form eight large chabutras encircling the mausoleum. The canals, though still narrow, are wider than the tiny threads of water set in the broad masonry paths at Sikandarah, or those of Humayun's tomb, and are bordered by long parterres lately replanted with cypress trees and flowers,

On fête days, when the fountains are playing, the view through the great doorway of the serai—a building fifty feet high—is very fine, and will be still further enhanced when the cypress trees have grown taller. Climbing plants are well established, and wreath the walls and alcoves with graceful garlands; but the garden itself and the fine court of the serai have the usual bare look, and the avenues that bordered the wide paths and the groves of trees on the grass plots which once shaded the road-weary pilgrims have gone.

Bold repetition and breadth of treatment lend, as we have seen, a wonderful fascination, a grand, serene, and peaceful dignity to Indian garden-craft. But these vast gardens of the plains when bereft, as so many of them are, of their flowers, trees, and water, the edges of their raised stone walks and platforms left sharp and hard—casting long unbroken shadows in the blazing sunshine—easily degenerate into a tiresome, soulless formality, a tedious reiteration of bare lines; the very lines which, as Ruskin points out, when partly clothed, by their contrast form the best foil to the grace of natural curves in plant and foliage and heighten the enjoyment of the wild luxuriant vegetation—the rapid growth which shoots up after the first summer rains, the dancing sway of flowering twigs and the coloured foam of the creepers as they fall in cascades down the trees.

The Nishat Bagh, on the Dal Lake and meaning Garden of Gladness, is, true to its name, the gayest of all Mughal gardens. Its twelve terraces, one for each sign of the zodiac, rise dramatically higher and higher up the mountain side from the eastern shore of the lake. The stream tears foaming down the carved cascades, fountains play in every tank and watercourse, filling the garden with their joyous life and movement. The flower-beds on these sunny terraces blaze with colour—always beautiful, when autumn lights up the poplars in clear gold and the big chenars burn red against the dark blue rocky background, there are few more brilliant, more breathlessly entrancing sights than this first view of Asaf Khan's Garden of Gladness.